

# Region 26 Council

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July 26, 2005

Andy S. Pollock, Executive Director  
Nebraska Public Service Commission  
300 The Atrium  
1200 N Street  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4927

RE: Docket #911-014/PI99

Dear Mr. Pollock,

In regards to Nebraska Public Service Commission's Docket dated June 28, 2005 we of Region 26 wish to express our thanks to the Public Service Commission for the opportunity to express our view on this important issue.

The counties within the boundaries of Region 26 have progressive Landline 911 service and are up to date with regional landline provider's current capabilities and with personnel second to none. Some landline providers have more advanced technology than others; however, Region 26 is equipped to proceed with landline technology advances. Currently the landline surcharges to each county within our boundaries are meeting Region 26's needs at present. However, without help from the Nebraska Public Service Commission implementation of Phase I and Phase II are highly unlikely to proceed within a timely manner due to lack of funding. Region 26 understands the need of enhanced 911 service as wireless communication is becoming more wide spread everyday. This is partially caused by customers who have dropped landline service due to high cost and have gone to wireless communication only. Due to this trend the implementation of Phase II is a critical need. As technology advances with broadband communication using computers instead of landline or wireless companies we will face another challenge to both the Public Safety Answering Point's (PSAP's) and the Public Service Commission with funding issues of it own.

With the dispersal of the 911 surcharge money currently in the Nebraska Public Service Commission's trust would allow Region 26 and many other PSAP's to become fully Phase II capable. This is a cause that seems most urgent to us with the recent deaths of two of Region 26's children lost in the highly populated eastern part of Nebraska. How many more children and adults have to needlessly perish before the Public Service Commission will release the needed funding. This is a statewide problem not one that just involves Region 26 and it has been brought on by either the Public Service Commissions refusal to release funding, or the Wireless Providers demand for over compensation.

With the poor wireless communication within the rural areas of Western Nebraska and areas of Region 26 with no wireless service, we are hard pressed to find funding for a service that is not

provided for many of our own counties. We at Region 26 will endeavor to provide Phase II enhanced 911 services to any person within our regional boundaries, but this is a cost we cannot afford to do alone with our low tax revenue and a raise in an all ready over burden economy is not a viable option.

Reimbursement to the wireless providers should be in direct proportion with the service that they actually provide statewide, not just what is provided in the Eastern and I-80 Corridor. It would seem advisable for the Pubic Service Commission to demand the wireless providers to provide the same exact service for the entire state before reimbursement on a large scale be a major concern. Funding for PSAP's should be the first priority. Many of our surrounding States have Enhanced 911 service leaving Nebraska lagging behind states that have as low or lower mean income than Nebraska.

We at Region 26 realize all to well that funding is a major issue, and understand that a consolidation of PSAP's will help the State with funding. Region 26 has experienced very little communication problems with up to eleven counties. That however is up to the State to consolidate or not and it does not change the fact none of us can reach Phase II without proper funding.

The availability for Federal funding as in Homeland Security funds are one answer because without the ability to properly communicate, homeland security is compromised. With Homeland Security funding being cut and the implementation of the Statewide Communication VHF radio channels taking precedence, this option is becoming a large question mark. The final problem still comes down to the needed funding either from State or Federal help. The bottom line still comes down to the Public Service Commission and the elected officials in the Legislature to make the final decision.

Region 26 feels the State of Nebraska cannot afford to keep avoiding making a funding decision. The lives of every resident of Nebraska and our many out-of-state travelers hinge on the funding or in the case presented to us, lack of funding. The need exists and nothing can diminish this proven fact. Terrorism is a part of life in our world today no matter what the cause; a bomb, livestock infection or a plague man made or act of God. Just as being lost in a snow storm or having an accident in a remote area with no communication, terror is terror no matter what its form. In this age of mobility and technology the greatest chance of reporting any of these events will likely be reported by a wireless phone. Our question to you is how long can we wait for funding and full cooperation from the wireless providers? The clock is ticking and with each passing moment some type of disaster is approaching. Help Region 26 to help the citizens of the great state of Nebraska before we run out of time.

Again, Region 26 wishes to thank the Nebraska Public Service Commission for the opportunity to reply on this most important issue.

Sincerely,

Alma Beland  
Region 26 Director/Emergency Manager

Thomas E. Smith  
Region 26 Board Chairman